



# The American Girls News

The Official Newspaper of The American Girls Club

Volume 3, Issue 1, February/March 1998

## Sharing a Love for Kirsten

*Behind the scenes on an American Girls tour at Gammelgården Museum*  
by Club member Jennifer Stromberg



The first time I heard about Kirsten, I was eight years old and away at a Swedish language camp. My *farmor*, or grandma on my father's side, is Swedish, and she sent me and three of my cousins to learn about our heritage. A camp counselor read the book *Meet Kirsten* to us. I loved it! As soon as I got home, I read all the other Kirsten books.

It was definitely the start of something! Now I'm 14 years old, and I have a very special job. I'm a guide assistant for the *Kirsten* at Gammelgården museum tours in Minnesota, where Kirsten's stories take place.

Gammelgården has five old Swedish immigrant buildings from the 1850s, the same decade Kirsten and her family came to America. Visitors get to see things like the kind of home Kirsten lived in, the kind of barn she had, and all the things she and her family used every day.

As a guide assistant on the Kirsten tour, I get to tell groups of visitors a little about *Midsommar*, Kirsten's Swedish summer holiday, celebrated on June 24. Then I teach a *Midsommar* song and dance. It's about small frogs, and almost everybody, including adults, has loads of fun jumping up and down and singing "*kou ack ack ack*." That's Swedish for "ribbit, ribbit, ribbit!"

Next, we make crafts. I teach visitors to make things that Kirsten made, such as braided rugs and woven paper heart baskets. We also make mini *majstangs* (MY-stangs), or maypoles. Kirsten

danced around a *majstang* on *Midsommar*. Another craft I teach is *dala* painting, a traditional style of Swedish painting.

While visitors work on their crafts, I get to talk to every-

one. This is almost the best part, because the tour brings in people from all over the country—and the world. It's great to hear about their interest in

Kirsten. Plus I get to hear all about life where they live.

I start out our lunchtime by saying an old Swedish table prayer that Kirsten and her family would have said before each meal. Then I tell everyone about the lunch. It is made up of foods that Kirsten ate almost every day, such as a rye sandwich, and some things that were special treats, such as *pepparkakor* cookies. Everyone likes to try the tradition about the *pepparkakor* cookie and the wish. It goes like this: First, put the *pepparkakor* cookie in the palm of your hand and make a wish. Then break the cookie with the knuckles of your other hand. If the cookie breaks into three pieces—no more and no less—then your wish will come true!



Traditional Swedish heart baskets and dala horse



Gammelgården Museum

I love my job as a guide assistant. It's so fun to use some of the Swedish I know and to meet other American Girls fans. I get to share my love of Kirsten and Swedish culture and use it to make people happy. And the wonderful experience at Gammelgården really does make people happy—almost everyone leaves the museum smiling. The only sad faces I've seen have been from girls who liked it so much they didn't want to leave!

For information on *Kirsten* at Gammelgården and other American Girls Museum Programs, call 1-800-845-0005, or check the American Girls Web site at <http://www.americangirl.com>.

## Meet the Reporter

Jennifer Stromberg is only half Swedish, but, thanks to her grandma, she's always loved Swedish culture. She also loves reading, playing musical instruments—especially the flute—and learning languages. She's on her school's cross-country running team, too.



Jennifer Stromberg



Inside an original pioneer home at Gammelgården







Dressed for the '70s (back row, left to right): Zara Perciful, Katie Kuhns, Christi Williams; (front row, left to right): Breanna Venable, Mallory Renfro, and Amy Elms

# Look to the Past—Learn for the Future

*Club travels backward through time.*

Eleven-year-old Christi Williams of Texas knew her friends loved the American Girls, but when she suggested they start a club, she didn't know how much they loved history! At the very first meeting, the girls decided to learn about the twentieth century. They planned to investigate one decade at each of their meetings.

Each club member gets an assignment for each meeting—one girl researches crafts of the decade, another researches

foods or music. "We interview our parents and grandparents, even great-grandparents, and read a lot of history books," says club member Breanna Venable, age 11.

The girls' favorite decade so far is the 1950s. They dressed in poodle skirts, bobby socks, and saddle shoes, and pretended they were in a soda shop. They served ice cream floats, malted milk balls, and popcorn, and played 1950s music. "We had a sock hop," says Zara Perciful, age 11.

"Everyone was jitterbugging, twisting, and giggling."

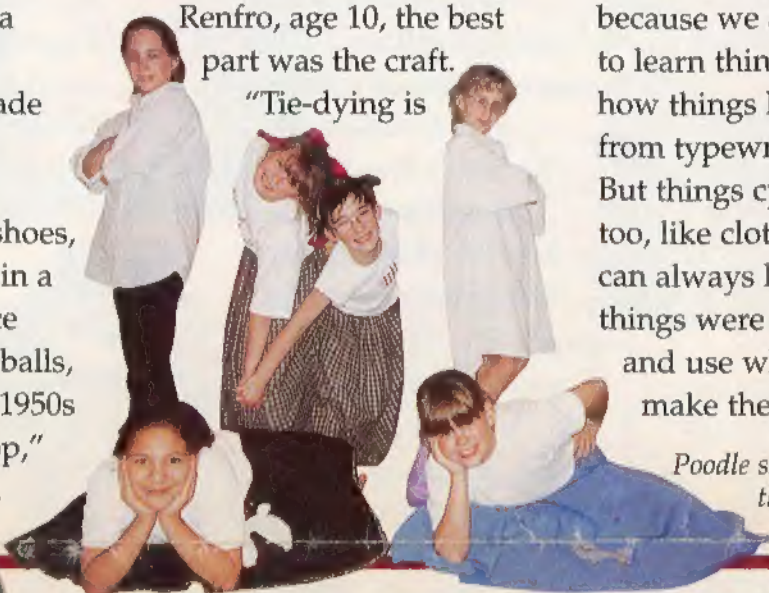
The 1970s meeting was a lot of fun, too. "The '70s were a special time for most of our moms," says Christi, "so interviewing them was really interesting. Plus we found lots of old clothes, like bell-bottoms, to dress up in." For Mallory Renfro, age 10, the best part was the craft.

"Tie-dyeing is

so cool!" she says.

"Our club meetings are history lessons," says 10-year-old Katie Kuhns. "But we share information from our families' pasts, which brings it to life. We know real people who actually experienced our history." Ten-year-old Amy Elms adds, "This club is special because we all work together to learn things. It's amazing how things have changed—from typewriters to computers! But things cycle back around, too, like clothing fashions. You can always look back to how things were done in the past and use what you learn to make the present better."

*Poodle skirts and ponytails—the 1950s look!*



## Start Talking!

*This club's name was easy to pick.*

It all started when my parents took me on a camping trip with their friends," 10-year-old Kensey Kaminski of California says. "Their friends had daughters like me!" All the girls turned out to be American Girls fans. "We talked so much about the American Girls, we started The Talking Club!"

The girls try to meet twice

a month, but when they can't, they write in their Talking Club journals. "We traded them back and forth," says Kensey. "When I went to an American Girls Fashion Show, I wrote all about it and let everyone read my journal. The journals are a great way to keep up with each other—and they make a terrific record of our American Girls club!"



Talking Club members: (back row, left to right) Chelsea Kaminski, Bonnie McIntosh, Kendra Gavin, Bree Morse; (front row, left to right) Mary McIntosh, Kensey Kaminski, Brittney Gavin

### The American Girls News

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## Sneak Peek

*Join the American Girls at play.*

A brand-new American Girls calendar is in the works, and it's packed full of fun and games for you to try. Make a snowdome, put together a dancing puppet, make a secret decoder, and lots more as you join in each American Girl's favorite playtime games. Best of all, make your very own ragdoll playmate! Look for the 1999 American Girls calendar this spring in Pleasant Company's catalogue and in bookstores near you.





# GALLERY OF AMERICAN GIRLS



Kirsten and I are best friends.  
Lindsay Miller, age 8, Florida



Drawing by  
Mallori McNelly  
age 10, Tennessee



## Write to Us!

Send your projects and club news to:  
**The American Girls News**  
P.O. Box 628218  
Middleton, WI 53562-8218

Please include your name, address, telephone,  
and birthday—date, month, and year.



When I got all A's in school, my Mom  
gave me Kirsten. This is my first day  
with her.

Elizabeth Gutiérrez, age 10, Puerto Rico



Drawing by  
Hannah Prather  
age 10, Tennessee

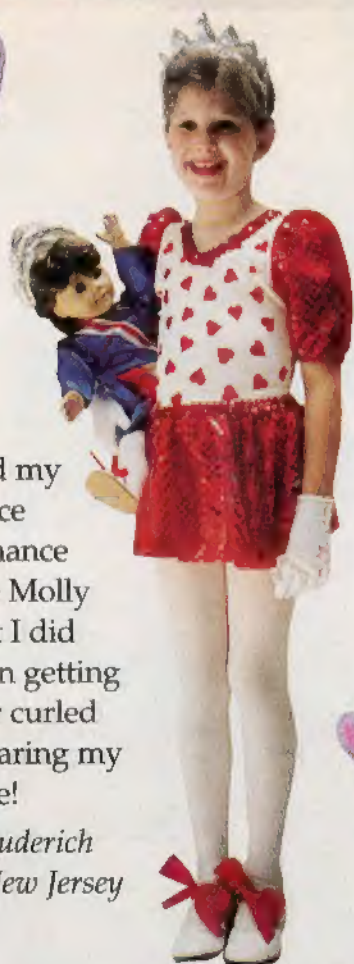


We're all dressed to skate—even our dolls!

Left to right: Ali Mears, 11; Stephanie Hilton, 11;  
Tiffany Reimers, 11; Anna Nelson, 10; and Emily  
Mears, 10; Colorado



My pen pal has turned into a  
phone-and-friend pal!  
Allyson Felps (right), age 12, with  
pen pal Stephanie Andrews, age 12,  
California



I missed my  
big dance  
performance  
just like Molly  
did, but I did  
have fun getting  
my hair curled  
and wearing my  
costume!

Kelly Duderich  
age 7, New Jersey

## Through the Night

I went through the darkness and still,  
in the river, through the forest, and  
over the hill.  
I ran for freedom,  
freedom to run and laugh and sing!  
For freedom is a wonderful thing.  
I almost got caught.  
The slave master sought.  
Finally I am safe and sound,  
for my family I have found.

Tiffany Perini,  
age 10, Florida



We celebrated Josefina's arrival by cracking a  
piñata! Then we painted pots and made ramilletes.  
Back row, left to right: Kelly Sullivan, 9; Danielle  
Pike, 9; Melissa Feather, 9; front row: Elaine  
Chang, 10; Amy Hill, 9; Adriene Goodwin, 9;  
Texas

Drawing by  
Kristine Diesslin  
age 9, New York



## Club Poll

Which is your favorite part of this issue  
of *The American Girls News*? Which is  
your least favorite part? Write down  
your answers. Mail them to:

The American Girls News  
Club Poll  
P.O. Box 6221  
Middleton, WI 53562-8218

## What ice-skating game did all the American Girls play?

Crack the Whip! Form a line and hold on to the girl in front of you. Start skating faster and faster, and see how long you can all keep together!





AN AMERICAN

# It's a Valentine

Invite your friends to make

## Make Valentines

Run your own valentine assembly line for a day.

You will need:

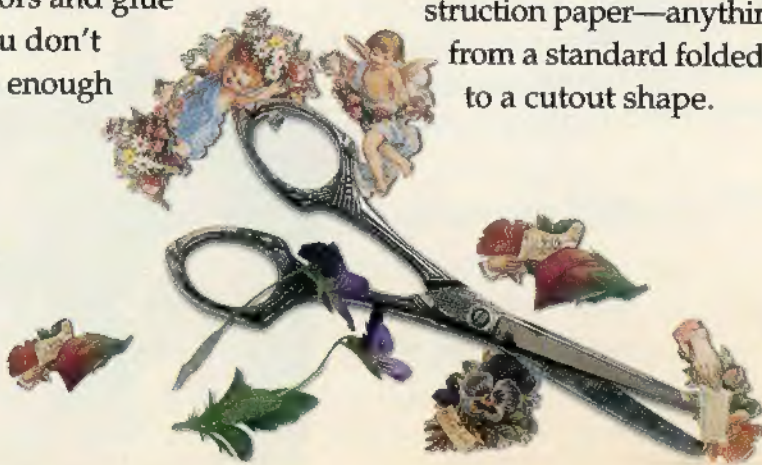
- Newspaper
- Construction paper, old magazines, wrapping and tissue paper, paper lace or doilies, bits of ribbon and yarn, buttons, stickers
- Scissors
- Glue
- 2 or more friends—ask your friends to bring scissors and glue if you don't have enough



**1** Cover a table with a plastic cloth or newspaper. Then arrange all your materials on the table. Each guest makes a background card out of construction paper—anything from a standard folded card to a cutout shape.



**2** Each guest passes her background to the girl on her right. She adds one decoration of her choice to the background card she receives, then passes the valentine on again. Keep passing the valentines around until everyone has added decorations. Display the finished valentines on your table for inspiration!



## Serve Apple Valentines

Munch on crunchy valentines.


On small pieces of paper, write short sages, such as "Friends Forever." Push in one end of each paper, thread a ribbon and tie it to the stem of a bright red apple.

## Snack on Sugar Sweet Hearts

Make these snacks before your party, or take a break and let everyone join in the fun.



You will need:

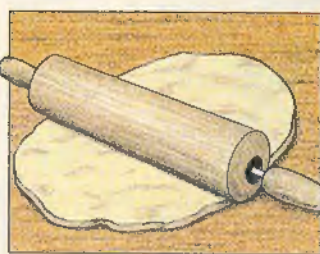
 An adult to help you

Ingredients:

- 1 tube refrigerated sugar cookie dough
- 1 egg yolk
- 1/4 teaspoon water
- Red food coloring

Equipment:

- Rolling pin
- Heart-shaped cookie cutter
- Small, clean artists' paintbrushes
- Cookie sheet
- Spatula



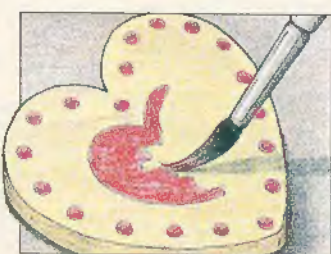
**1** Preheat the oven to 350°. Prepare the dough according to the directions for rolled cookies.



**2** Cut out heart shapes with the cookie cutter and place them on the cookie sheet.



**3** Mix the egg yolk and water. Add 15 drops red food coloring.



**4** With the paintbrushes, paint valentine designs on the cookie dough.



**5** Bake the cookies for 7 to 10 minutes, or until golden. Remove with the spatula.



## Who is Valentine's Day named after?

Saint Valentine was a Roman priest named Valentinus. In Ancient Rome, the emperor once banned marriage. Valentinus thought that was unfair and secretly performed sev



# N GIRLS PARTY

## e Production!

ce one-of-a-kind valentines!

### Sip Strawberries

Sweet drinks for everyone!

You will need:

- Blender
- 3 cups frozen strawberries
- 3 cups apple juice
- Extra strawberries or cherries for decoration

Have an adult help you put the strawberries and apple juice in a blender. Mix on high until smooth. Pour into glasses, and drop a strawberry or cherry on top.

valentine mes-  
ch a small hole  
bon through,  
pple.



### For Keeps!

Tour a valentine collection with Club member  
Gwendolyn Stockman.



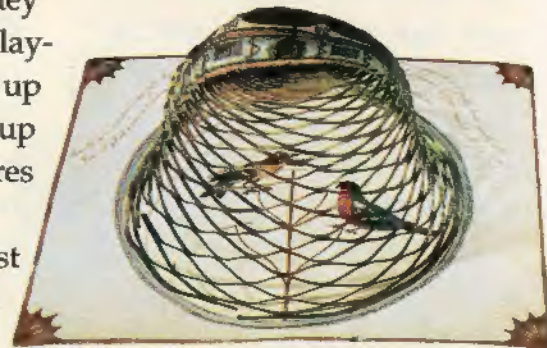
A puzzle knot valentine

I got to tour the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum valentine collection with an expert—Patricia Tice, the *curator*, or person in charge of the museum. I learned a lot!

Ms. Tice showed me a common colonial valentine called a puzzle knot. The puzzle was to figure out how to fold the valentine so the message on it would make sense. That was fun! But the most fascinating valentine I saw was a honeycomb card. These cards were

really popular in the 1850s. They look flat, but they have many layers of cutouts. When you pull up on a ribbon, the cutouts open up into a lacy beehive with pictures inside. It's so cool!

I also learned about the first American valentine company. It was a group of friends just like mine! Ms. Tice said that it was started by a girl named Esther Howland. Inspired by a fancy valentine she received from an admirer, Esther hired her friends to help make her own valentines, right around her parents' dining room table. First, Esther designed the cards. Then one person made backgrounds, another cut out pictures to be glued on, another added ribbon, and so on. It was just like an assembly line.



A honeycomb card

I got to see some of her cards. The different combinations of paper lace, verses, and *scrap*, or colorful pictures, were really beautiful. By 1848, Esther's New England Valentine Company was making thousands of dollars a year. And Esther was just 19!



A valentine assembly line

I saw lots of other cards I didn't even recognize as valentines. Popular colors used to be yellow, white, green, and even black! It wasn't until after 1920 that valentines became red and pink. But no matter what they look like, valentines have always meant the same thing—"I love you"!

### Meet the Reporter:

Gwendolyn Stockman was born on New Year's Day in Switzerland! Now she's 14 years old and lives in New York. Gwendolyn likes to play tennis, ski, in-line skate, and bike.



Gwendolyn Stockman





# Sewing for Freedom



In the 1830s, many women thought slavery was wrong, but they didn't have the right to vote against it. Take a look at what they did instead!

**I**magine that you're a young woman in 1834.

Everywhere you go, you hear talk about slavery. Some people even think there will be a war! You're told not to worry. Politics are for men, and your thoughts should be on your home and family. But you *are* worried, and you think slavery is unfair. You want to do something about it. But what?

As you stitch together a quilt for the coming winter, you suddenly have an idea. Even if you can't vote or speak out in public about slavery, you can make your feelings known. You'll use your sewing needle like a pen!

The checkered pattern you are stitching reminds you of

the difficult path slaves have to travel to reach freedom. So you call it Underground Railroad. At your next quilting bee, you show it to your friends. Someone else holds up a pattern that reminds you of chains.

Slave Chain becomes its name. You all feel strongly that slavery is wrong. Together you decide to form a Female Anti-Slavery Society. Your motto is "May the points of our needles prick the slave owner's conscience!"

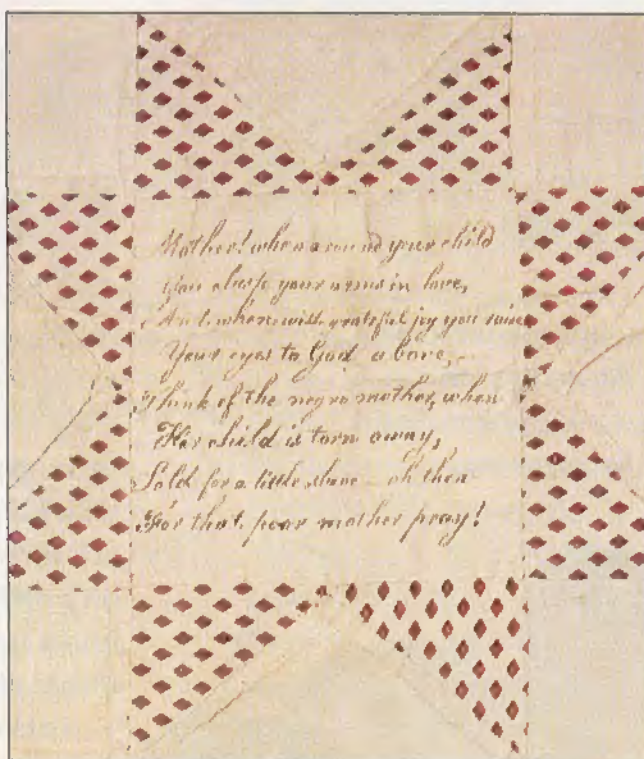
In the 1830s, hundreds of women formed anti-slavery

societies. The societies began to sell needlework to raise money for the abolitionist, or anti-slavery, cause.

One society planned The Boston Anti-Slavery Fair, which became a yearly sale. Underground Railroad and Slave Chain quilts were popular items at the fair. An Evening Star quilt sold at the fair had an anti-slavery message in the center. The quilt reminded everyone of the North Star that guided slaves to freedom in the North. The first Boston Anti-Slavery Fair raised \$600. By 1854, sales added up to \$5,000!

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, anti-slavery societies worked even harder to raise money. Many people made signature quilts—they paid money, from a penny to a dollar, to "buy" squares and sign their names on the blocks. The money helped both escaping slaves and the

soldiers fighting to free them. Children—girls and boys—joined sewing societies or "Alert Clubs" to help. One club worked extra hard to make a signature quilt. To earn money for buying squares, one member drove a cow to pasture every day for three weeks.



Center patch of Evening Star quilt, 1836

Another promised to wash her little brother's face every morning. When the quilt was finished, they marked 34 squares with their names and ages—none over 12 years. On the center square they wrote, "For any soldier who loves little children."

The club sent its quilt and its pennies to the Sanitary Commission, an organization that gave food, bedding, and

medicine to Civil War hospitals. In fact, more than 7,000 anti-slavery societies and clubs gave both their work and any money they raised to the Sanitary Commission. The commission decided to organize huge fairs where societies from several states could sell their goods at once.

"We received no assistance from men," wrote one organizer. The men in the Sanitary Commission actually laughed at the idea of organized fairs. They called the first Sanitary Commission Fair "a national quilting party." Over the next few years, however, those "parties" raised more than a million dollars to fight slavery. By working together and uniting across the nation, women—and children—had found a way to make a difference.

Hundreds of items, like these potholders, were for sale at the first Commission Fair.



Slave Chain quilt pattern



The Great Central Sanitary Commission Fair, June 1864



Do you know another name for the North Star?

The North Star is also called the polestar.



# Quilting for a Cause

*Making a difference today the old-fashioned way by Club member Emily Haury*

Quilts helped raise money for good causes in Addy's time, and they still do today. I know, because I've seen it happen! I've helped make quilts for the Mid-Kansas Mennonite Central Committee Relief Sale for seven years now. The Relief Sale is really a huge fair just



*The quilting booth at Addy's fair*

like Addy attended in 1865. It features all kinds of great food, crafts from other countries, plants, baked goods, and pony rides and games for kids. But the quilts are the best part. About 30,000 people come to the sale, and it seems like most of them go to the quilt auction!

Money from our quilts helps people in countries where there has been drought, flood, famine, or war. The Mennonite Central Committee represents the Mennonite faith, which promotes peace and nonviolence, and it helps victims around the world by sending canned food, clothes, medical supplies, and



*From left to right: Emily Haury at age eight with friends Anna Kurtz and Carli Ash. "We pieced and tied this quilt together in third grade," says Emily.*

more. There are even special kits to send. Health kits have a towel, toothbrush, toothpaste, nail clippers, and soap. School kits have notebooks, a ruler, pencils, crayons, and an eraser. Money from the sale also goes to literacy projects, soup kitchens, and lots more.

Each year about 100 quilts are auctioned, along with many afghans, comforters, and wall hangings. They are shown one

by one on a stage as they are auctioned. In 1997, bed quilts usually sold for more than \$1,000 each, but every year a few special quilts sell for several thousand dollars! When a quilt sells for such a high price, bidders are waving, the auctioneers are shouting, and the crowd claps and cheers as the price climbs. I worked on two quilts that sold for over \$3,000 dollars each. It was

so much fun to see the crowd get excited about quilts I had helped make!

I started sewing when I was six years old and began quilting a few years after that. My mom and I have made four comforters for the auction. I have also helped my mom make the quilts for our church to donate to the sale.

My mom quilts constantly, and sewing with her is a lot of fun. All of my great-grandmothers quilted, and we have some of their quilts at our house to remember them by. These quilts are very special to us. I've made small doll quilts for all of my cousins, and I hope those quilts are very special to them. I plan to continue this family tradition!



*"Each block in this memory quilt I made represents something about me, like the apple and books, which tell you I like school, and read lots."*

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

### March is Women's History Month!



Read: *They Led the Way* by Johanna Johnston, about 14 American women who all had the courage to voice their beliefs and change history.

Visit the Internet: check out <http://teleport.com/~megaines/women.html>  
<http://www.nwhp.org/month.html>



### Meet the Reporter

Emily Haury is 14 years old. She enjoys playing piano, violin, and tennis. She loves to read



*Emily Haury*

and, of course, sew! Her favorite quilt block is the nine patch. "It is nine squares arranged in three rows of three. The four corners and center block are made out of one fabric. The other blocks are a different fabric. It is very simple, but it can be arranged in so many different ways!"



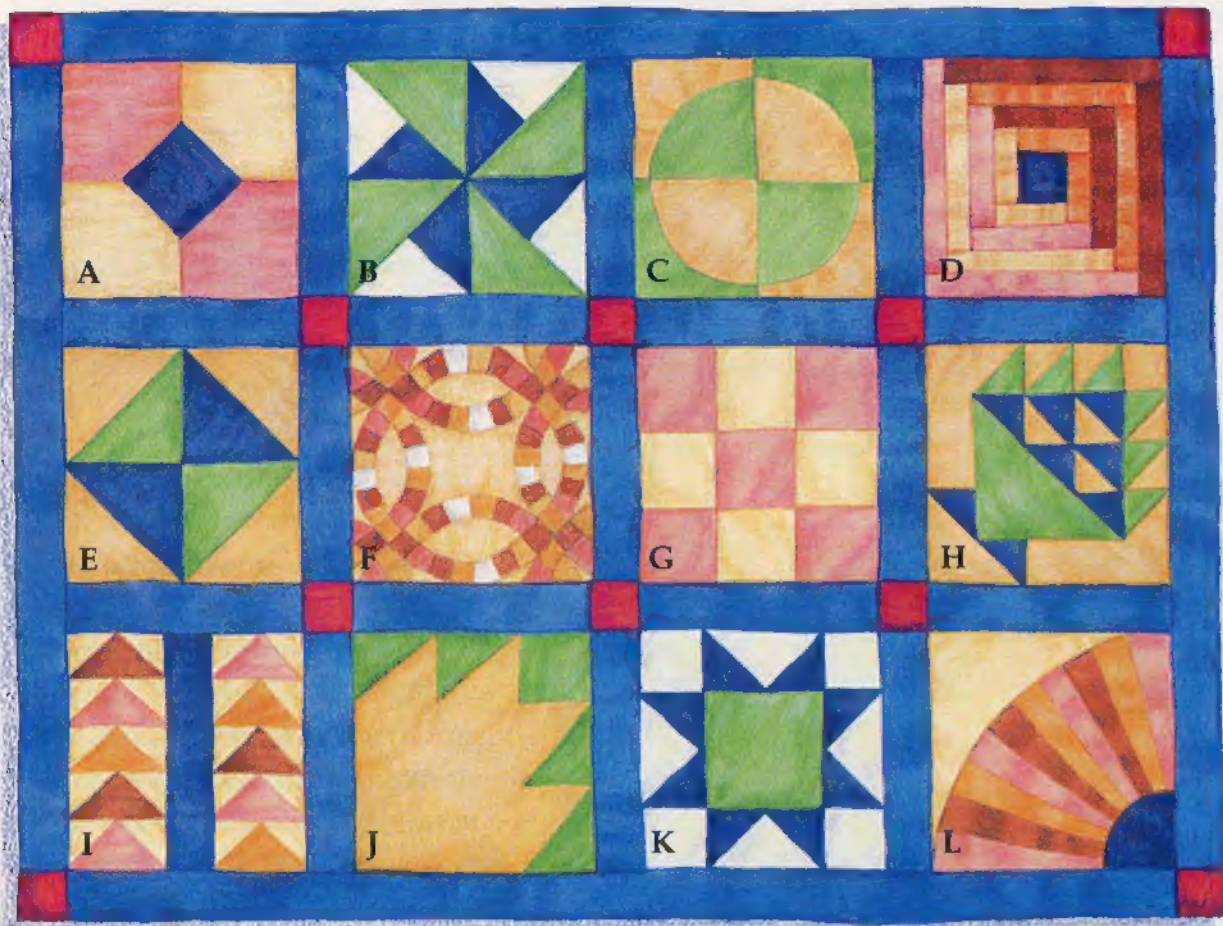
### Can a log cabin be stitched together?

Yes! Log Cabin is a very old and very popular quilt block pattern. Play Pick a Patch on page 8 of this paper and you'll find out what it looks like!



# Pick a Patch

Quilt pattern names come from the imagination! What do these patterns remind you of? See if you can match each pattern to its correct name.



- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Evening Star <b>B</b>        | 7. Log Cabin <b>D</b>                  |
| 2. Fan <b>L</b>                 | 8. Broken Dishes <b>C</b>              |
| 3. Double Wedding Ring <b>F</b> | 9. Pinwheel <b>E</b>                   |
| 4. Grape Basket <b>K</b>        | 10. Nine Patch <b>G</b>                |
| 5. Flying Geese <b>I</b>        | 11. Robbing Peter to Pay Paul <b>J</b> |
| 6. Bow Tie <b>A</b>             | 12. Duck's Foot in the Mud <b>H</b>    |

# Riddle Me This!



Sam loved to ask  
Addy riddles.  
She tried to  
stump him  
with this one.

*What holds a family together so tight  
nothing can pull it apart?*

Do you know the answer?  
Try answering these:

*What can turn without moving?*

*What can you keep taking and still leave behind?*

# Friends Forever

The American Girls all knew what it took to be  
a true friend. Can you find their seven keys to  
lasting friendship?



Words to Find

- |         |        |
|---------|--------|
| loyalty | faith  |
| heart   | love   |
| sharing | caring |
| trust   |        |

# Pattern Puzzler

Kirsten, Anna, Lisbeth, and Mary are stitching 4 different quilt patterns with 4 different fabrics of 4 different colors. Using the clues below, can you fill in the grid to show who is making which pattern out of what fabric and color?

	Anna	Lisbeth	Kirsten	Mary
pattern	wreath	starburst	flower heart	heart
color	calico	white	blue	red
fabric	calico	linen	linen	cotton

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Anna is making a wreath pattern.         | 6. The linen fabric is blue.       |
| 2. The flower pattern is blue.              | 7. Lisbeth's fabric is white.      |
| 3. The cotton fabric is for a heart.        | 8. The wreath is made of calico.   |
| 4. The muslin fabric is not for the flower. | 9. Mary's fabric is red.           |
| 5. The starburst pattern is not brown.      | 10. Lisbeth is not making a heart. |

cotton	linen	muslin	calico	fabric
red	blue	white	brown	color
heart	flower	starburst	wreath	pattern
Mary	Kirsten	Lisbeth	Anna	

PATTERN PUZZLER:

Footsteps  
Love  
Milk, when it turns sour  
RIDDLE ME THIS:  
4. H 8. E 12. J  
3. F 7. D 11. C  
2. L 6. A 10. G  
1. K 5. I 9. B  
FRIENDS FOREVER:  
PICK A PATCH:

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